FOUNDED 1921

OCTOBER 1973

EDITOR R.PALME DUTT

LABOUR MONTHLY

A MAGAZINE OF LEFT UNITY · 25p

Labour Conference Special

The Editor
Labour's Future

Dennis Skinner MP
To Build a New Britain

Joan Maynard
The 1973 TUC

Harry Smith
Trades Councils

Chile/Kate Clark : South Africa/John Gaetsewe
Bob Stewart/P. Kerrigan : 11% Fraud/A. Brown
Transport/P. Goodwin : Rail Safety/W. Ronksley

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LABOUR MONTHLY

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VOL. 55 No. 10 OCTOBER . 1973

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Notes of the Month

LABOUR'S FUTURE

'I have no fears for the future of society. It is bright with hope.'
PRESIDENT HOOVER, Inaugural Address in 1929, seven months before the stock market crash opened the depression which brought 20 million unemployed and closed the doors of half the banks.

'This time there is going to be no going back. We are going on.'
PRIME MINISTER HEATH, speech at Gravesend, September 4, 1973.

September 17, 1973

Pride comes before a fall. Mr Heath is still confident that he can control the sick convulsions of modern monopoly capitalism. With ironic smiles generations of his predecessors who have indulged the same illusions and bitten the dust watch the struttings of this latest aspirant on the stage of his limitless self-confidence. But that self-confidence is not shared by the harsh realities of a slumping stock market, a tumbling pound, soaring prices, and threats of a third devaluation. Small wonder that the widest sections of public opinion, including also some influential business circles, show little trust in Mr Heath's self-confidence, and turn discussion to the question whether the Labour Party, as the visible alternative in the present stage of the two-party system, has an effective policy to meet the situation with more success.

Labour Party Conference's Key Role

This year's Labour Party Conference is faced with decisions involving the whole future of the political labour movement and of the political prospect in Britain. The discredit of the old type of policies of the past quarter of a century is universally recognised. The fatal danger of offering a repetition of these policies as adequate to meet the challenge of the present situation is no less universally recognised, equally by all on the left, and also, within the limits of their understanding, by those on the right. This is not to say that the current official policies advocated by the present dominant leadership of the Parliamentary Labour Party and Shadow Cabinet represent an adequate alternative to the disastrous record of the Heath Tory government. These policies are still too soaked through

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with bipartisanship on a host of major issues, such as Nato, Ireland, US Polaris bases in Britain, or incomes policy, to represent an adequate alternative.

Electoral Choice

A constructive alternative policy, corresponding to the class interests of the workers and the overwhelming majority of the people is represented in the electoral field by the candidates of the organised Marxist section of the political labour movement, the Communist Party. But in the present stage of electoral development, with the conditions of the existing undemocratic electoral system canalised to impose effective choice between two major parties, only a relatively small minority of the electorate will have the opportunity in this election to vote for such an effective alternative programme. Thus for the mass of the electorate in the vast majority of constituencies in this key election the effective choice is between Tory and Labour. The victory of Labour by the support of the electorate and the mass movement would represent in these conditions the first indispensable step for the defeat of Torysim and the advance to a radical new policy. For this reason the decisions of the Labour Party Conference in October are of vital importance to determine the policies which Labour will represent in this key election and to which a Labour government should be committed.

Third Party Illusions

In this political situation the arduous attempts of the policy-makers of Liberalism, buoyed up by the protest vote successes in recent by-elections, have sought to present the Liberal Party as a third alternative, capable of breaking the domination of the two major parties, or at any rate winning sufficient parliamentary strength to fulfil a 'balancing' role. With this ambitious aim they have prepared an elaborate 8,000 word policy statement entitled *Forward with the Liberals*. Unfortunately an examination of this document reveals, not a third alternative, but, beneath all the flurry of flowery phrases about 'concern for the individual' and 'participation' and the miscellany of issues, the hard core of bipartisanship with Toryism is revealed on the most important controversial issue affecting Britain, to which the majority of the British people have registered their opposition through the opinion polls, the tying of Britain to the Common Market. Thus this 'third alternative' becomes, as so often, an alias for alliance with Toryism, and the 'balancing role', if sufficient parliamentary representation should be secured to make its

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exercise possible, would be a balancing role on the side of the pro-Tory right-wing elements in the Parliamentary Labour Party, to weaken the fighting strength of the labour movement. For the mass of the electorate in the majority of constituencies the effective choice is between Toryism and Labour as the alternatives. For this reason the Labour Party Conference in October has the highest responsibility to determine the policies which should be presented to the electorate on behalf of Labour, and to ensure that these decisions shall be carried out.

Crisis of Britain's Economy

Two dominant features of the present situation are in general agreed by all sections of the labour movement, equally on the left and on the right. The first is the gravity of Britain's economic situation. The grimly complacent 'Nelson's blind eye' optimism of Mr Heath, proclaiming the present situation of Britain as one of continuous expanding advance, and denouncing alternative views as 'defeatist', is rejected by all Labour spokesmen. Mr Wilson has been in the forefront in his current campaign to hammer home the opposite facts, not yet as a 'crisis', as he puts it, but as a dangerous situation close to the edge of crisis: the record trade deficit; the record balance of payments deficit, running at a current annual rate of £1,800 million; the extreme depreciation of the pound raising the prices of all imports; the record inflationary policy expanding the money supply by £4,700 million without corresponding expansion of productive investment; the reckless unchecked soaring of the profits and capital gains of the big financial interests and speculators; the contrasting burdens on the mass of the people through soaring prices, the costs of the Common Market, the new height of mortgage interest rates, the operation of the Housing Finance Act to increase rents, and the successive phases of the squeeze on wages and lower incomes by the operations of the freeze, Phase II and now Phase III.

Mr Wilson's Alternative

But Mr Wilson in his current campaign has crowned his exposure of the economic record of the Heath government with the demand that Chancellor Barber be dismissed, and added the suggestion, in his speech on September 8 at Redruth in Cornwall, that:

> if Mr Barber were replaced by a back-bencher of City and economic experience, the Labour Party would on conditions co-operate with him. If

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> such a man would act in a national sense to repair the damage which has been done, and above all, introduce policies for uniting and not further dividing the nation, even now we would be prepared to give parliamentary support. (*Sunday Express*, September 9)

It is not surprising that this utterance should be interpreted in some quarters as a hint at the possibility of a future National Coalition government. Thus even the common ground of the indictment of the Heath government's economic record reveals at the same time the basic difference of class approach within the ranks of the left.

People's Search for an Alternative

There is no doubt that the widest sections of public opinion, including also some sections of business circles, are seeking for an alternative to the policies of the past over a quarter of a century since 1945, which, whether operated by Tory governments or also by Labour governments, have resulted in the repeated succession of the 'stop-go' routine and failed to solve the chronic crisis of Britain's economy. Recognition of this, and of the consequent bankruptcy of endeavouring to offer today the same kind of policies as previous Labour governments, is the second main factor which in varying degrees is accepted by all sections of the labour movement today. But recent opinion polls, if they are to be accepted as an accurate measure of a sufficiently representative sample, have revealed a different kind of approach of the general body of undifferentiated popular opinion to this question of the search for an alternative.

Voices of the People

In the poll of the Opinion Research Centre, conducted in the early days of September and reported in the *Times* of September 14, the question which won the most overwhelming majority was: 'Are you happy about the way things are going in Britain, or not?' Seventy-three per cent said they were 'not happy' about the way things are going in Britain today. Holding this view how would they express it in the coming general election? The largest single number, 38 per cent, declared that they would vote Labour (as against 30 per cent for the Tories, a significant proportion of the Tory vote having moved over to swell the Liberal 29 per cent, thus benefiting the Labour predominance). Asked if they thought 'the Labour Party could run the country well or badly, if it were re-elected', the largest number, 47 per cent answered 'badly'. Thus the heart of the problem of the present political situation is here revealed. The majority of

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the people are strongly dissatisfied with the way the country is run. In a general election they would express their desire for a change from the present régime in Britain by voting Labour. But the largest proportion, nearly half, have no confidence that Labour would run the country any better. Here is the decisive challenge now confronting all sections of the labour movement, to present a policy which can win the confidence of the people, not only as representing a change of holders of office, but as opening the way to effective change of the existing society. This is the essential task of the Blackpool Labour Party Conference.

Tactical Divisions

It is at this point that the manifest division arises between those on the left and those on the right. Certainly there would be a danger of over-simplifying the choice to reduce the vast variety and complexity of outlooks and personalities of different individuals and sections in the political labour movement to a straight-line confrontation of this nature. But the key contentious issue which has come to the forefront in the agenda and preparation of this Labour Party Conference is the proposal to direct the offensive for public ownership now, no longer only for sections of the capitalist economy as a prolonged procedure of successive stages, but to take over in one immediate action the biggest monopolies and financial centres which constitute the commanding heights of modern capitalism. The apparently arithmetical controversy over 25 or 200 enterprises to be taken over is an expression of this variation of approach. There is no suggestion from any section of the labour movement to abandon the aim embodied in Clause IV of the Labour Party Constitution since 1918, 'to secure for the producers by hand or brain the full fruits of their labour . . . upon the basis of the common ownership of the means of production.' That issue was settled when Gaitskell sought to amend the definition of the aim of the Labour Party in Clause IV, and was defeated. The aim of 'the common ownership of the means of production' is accepted by all; but it is accepted by the right-wing gradualists like the pious worshipper's vision of the future Kingdom of Heaven, to receive due reverent incantation on Sundays, while the rest of the week is engaged in practical business.

Gradualism or Social Transformation

Against this policy of gradualism, which in practice becomes co-operation with capitalism, successive Labour Party Conferences have carried demands for an immediate programme of large-scale

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nationalisation to speed the advance for social change in the direction of socialism. The Labour Party Conferences in 1971 and 1972 adopted resolutions for the public ownership of the land, banks, insurance and major monopolies. This year, among the 436 resolutions in the preliminary agenda, a widely sponsored demand is expressed, supported by a range of constituency parties and three trade unions, for a programme of large-scale extension of public ownership of the key sections and commanding heights of the economy, to open a new prospect for social transformation, preparing the future advance to socialism. The fact that these serious and widely supported militant demands, which reflect the advance of left currents in the political labour movement, are not yet always fully allied to the need for far-reaching transformation in political development to make possible their fulfilment, including the necessary strengthening of the organised Marxist section acting as an indispensable partner in the whole advance, is a feature of the present stage: understanding of these issues will develop with experience of the struggle. What is important is the intensity of the militant demand expressed in these resolutions, which is likely to find reflection in the proceedings at Blackpool, to combine the necessary recognition of the common front in the approaching general election with the call for a programme of far-reaching social transformation.

Who Decides Labour's Policy?

It is here that has arisen the most crucial issue at Blackpool. The still dominant right-wing or right-centrist leadership in the key commanding positions of the Shadow Cabinet and the parliamentary party, although with concessions to some role of the left alongside, has openly expressed alarm at the demand that the elected Labour Party Conference should decide Labour policy. There have even been hints of a possible veto. The Executive Report to the Blackpool Conference asserts that a Labour MP's actions are a matter for the parliamentary party and the constituency parties; and that, while the Labour Party Conference may adopt decisions on policy, it is for the Shadow Cabinet, in consultation with the Executive, to decide which items of policy should be adopted in the Labour programme for the general election or by a Labour government. On the other hand, the Labour Party Conference last year adopted a resolution instructing the parliamentary party to insist that MPs 'abide by conference decisions'. There is here a crucial issue for consideration at Blackpool.

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Principles of Democratic Decision

What is the issue? The responsibility of Labour MPs is defined in the Shadow Cabinet's view as being to the constituency parties and the electorate rather than to the democratically elected conference. But the counterposing is unreal. There is no separate entity 'the electorate'. The constituency parties and the electors to whom the Labour MPs are responsible are in fact the local Labour workers and electors supporting Labour who have returned these MPs to parliament in order to carry out Labour policy. But the decision of what is Labour policy can only be democratically determined by the appropriate organs of the Party. It cannot be determined by a caucus claiming superiority above decisions of the democratically elected conference. The Labour Party Conference needs to reach the main decisions on the general lines of policy, leaving room for practical day-to-day leadership in carrying out these main outlines.

For United Left Advance

With all the sharp issues of principle which come for decision at Blackpool, it is essential that the full and necessary discussion of all these matters of principle shall not weaken the indispensable common front of all sections of the political labour movement and the masses of the people against the present offensive of the Heath Tory government, and in response to the inspiring opportunities of the new international situation of the advance towards *détente*. The exchange of delegations between the Labour Party and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union is a welcome sign of the development of closer relations, alongside the differences of standpoint. The present offensive of the Heath government in Britain is the counterpart of its reactionary role in international affairs to promote every type of difficulty and complication in order to hinder the advance to *détente*.

Unity for Victory

Never in all the modern history of capitalism in Britain has there been such a ruthless reactionary offensive of the powerful financial interests represented by the Heath Tory government against the conditions, rights and living standards of the masses of the people, operating through the most elaborate torturer's mechanism of extortion and squeeze, equally through all the stages leading up to Phase III and now with the offensive of Phase III. Against this offensive the fullest fighting unity of all sections of the working class movement is essential. The vanguard battalions of the most strongly

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organised workers are moving to preparedness for action. The united fighting strength of all sections of the working class is essential to defeat the offensive of the Heath Tory government, hasten its downfall, and mobilise for the speediest return of an alternative government, representative of the broadest unity of the political labour movement and the masses of the people, and committed through the active pressure of all the militant forces of the working class and the left to a programme of far-reaching social transformation.

An Organ of Left Unity

As possibly the oldest continuously published journal, now in its fifty-third year, of the labour movement, and from its very first number to the present day an organ of left unity, combining the co-operation of a broad range of most of the leading personalities in the trade union, labour, progressive and international anti-imperialist movement, as well as from the fields of art and literature, with a Marxist editorial outlook, *Labour Monthly* has special reason to rejoice in the advance of left unity and united left-wing strength today in the trade union and labour movement. In those early days there were no bans and proscriptions, and the Editor and Associate Editor had the advantage of direct experience of work in the Labour Party headquarters, knowing all the personalities, assisting in the production of the Labour Press Service, and serving on Labour policy committees. Since then there have been many cross-currents; but *Labour Monthly* has always remained faithful to the aim of left unity. At a time when many once well-known magazines have gone out of existence, and been replaced by the new type of journals run on a deficit for prestige and other reasons, the support of our readers, by paying the heavy sales price we have to charge for our independence, and by their donations to our fund, all publicly and individually acknowledged, have made it possible for our magazine, without any wealthy backer, to survive economically. Of course it is run on a shoestring; no contributors are paid. But this support from readers which maintains our journal gives us inspiration that it is felt by them to be fulfilling a useful auxiliary role. Therefore, as a consistent fighter for the aims of left unity throughout these 52 years, our journal has all the more reason to be delighted with the advances now achieved in the widest co-operation of all on the left, equally in the trade unions and industry, in the trades councils, the lifting of the bans on united front organs, as with the invaluable Labour Research Department, and with the

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approach towards finding the ways for broad co-operation of all left fighters in the political labour movement in the same way as already in the trade unions. *Labour Monthly* will continue to serve the aim of left unity, for the co-operation of all fighters for the cause of the working class and socialism, preparing the way towards the victory of the socialist transformation of society in Britain as an integral part of the advance of socialism throughout the world.

R.P.D.

Apologies must be expressed to readers that this editorial survey of the issues of the Blackpool Labour Party Conference has been cut short from the original plan by reasons of physical disability and considerable physical difficulty in writing. It was sheer pig-headed obstinacy of the writer, when he was due to go into hospital, to delay it in order to complete the October number because he could not bear to fail to make his humble contribution to the splendid fight at the Blackpool Conference for a united left advance of the political labour movement. These conditions, involving hospital from the end of September, have prevented fulfilment of the original plan to devote the September editorial survey to the Trades Union Congress, the October survey to the Labour Party Conference, and the November survey to the Communist Party Congress, thus representing the three indispensable component parts of the political labour movement. Now the treatment in November will have to be handed over to an alternative able comrade. There may be a possibility to return to the questions of this triple survey in December.

R.P.D.

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BOB STEWART

With a deep sense of loss *Labour Monthly* joins in paying honour to the universally loved veteran and Grand Old Man of the British and international working class movement, Robert Stewart. Right up to the completion of the 96 years of his event-filled and fruitful life he remained active to the last, despite disabilities, to give inspiration, counsel and guidance to younger comrades. My personal memories of him are so close already as a foremost fighter before the foundation of the Communist Party, and his leading role in its foundation and in all its battles, that my thoughts turn back to the joy and pride which I felt at an early congress when I had offered some suggestions as a rank and file delegate from the floor in the discussion, and Bob Stewart in his reply from the platform referred to what I had said as constituting 'the most useful contribution' in the discussion. Praise from Bob Stewart was praise indeed. Bob was always for us a wise counsellor and guide, with a record of manifold struggles, and an indomitable spirit, equally in spells of imprisonment or in positions of responsibility and leadership. Harry Pollitt justly called him 'a model and example to all of us.' John MacLean, honoured by the Bolshevik revolution to be nominated as the Soviet diplomatic representative in Britain before recognition, and a very close friend of our journal, already in 1912 described Bob as 'the finest propagandist in Scotland.' When he was first elected by the Fourth Congress of the Communist Party to the Central Committee in 1922, the first Central Committee elected by the congress as a whole, it was a measure of the universal respect for him that Bob Stewart was one the seven members chosen. Alike in his 14 years of service on the Central Committee, as a representative in the international movement, in his subsequent service on the Control Commission and the Appeals Committee, and in all his ceaseless activity in every field, and personal contact, Bob helped to shape generations of working class fighters. On his eighty-third birthday in 1960, when various trends of ideas were arising among some sections, Bob gave his characteristic guidance: 'The acid test for a socialist anywhere is his attitude to the Soviet Union.' All the condolences of *Labour Monthly* are expressed to his family and relatives. The inspiration Bob Stewart has given us lives on, and will live on, through the years to come.

R.P.D.

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Labour Party Conference

(1) TO BUILD A NEW BRITAIN

Dennis Skinner MP

IF you have read those dark and sinister stories of left-wing takeovers within the Labour Party policy-making committees, you could be excused for thinking that the National Executive Housing Committee has escaped such dedicated militant attention. One only has to examine the policy statements on housing and it is too obvious that the leadership need to do a great deal more work. Take just one example of recent events in the present housing chaos and it becomes apparent what is lacking, particularly at parliamentary level.

With the announcement that mortgage interest rates had risen to 10 per cent, and the prospect of further increases; with building starts in the public and private sector down to the 1953 levels; with local government short-term borrowing at over 14 per cent, one would have expected the leading Labour housing spokesmen to have made mincemeat of the Tories. In fact, what we were treated to, with a few variations, was a constant reiteration of the need for a stabilisation fund. No wonder that countless thousands of mortgagees and prospective house-purchasers shake their heads at such a full-blooded frontal attack. No wonder that the Tory government took up the message and said they were examining similar proposals. Indeed, it is just possible for Heath to include the idea in his next phoney package to be presented to the TUC 'tête-à-tête' at Downing Street. He could at least adopt a stabilising measure without running the risk of upsetting the City, because, if ever there was a device whose main purpose was to support the property interests, then it is a stabilisation fund for building societies. What an opportunity it would concede to the banks and finance houses: they would step in and cream off the marginal borrowers at a rate of interest decided purely and simply by market forces. Unless, of course, it is intended that all such money-making institutions are to be taken into public ownership and control! But if that was done there would be no need for either stabilisation funds or building societies!

One thing is certain however, whatever present Party spokesmen may say, the movement outside, as witnessed by the 1973 Conference agenda on housing, has not gone overboard in suggesting

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measures intended to prop up building societies and property speculators. The resolutions and amendments indicate that the Party Programme, improved as it is compared with the actual performance of the last Labour government, still needs a great deal of attention. To begin with, it talks about the total repeal of the 1972 Tory Housing Finance Act, and then says precisely nothing on the future level of rents. All those millions of pounds that have passed from tenants' pockets to the financial institutions and the government in the form of increased rent will not, apparently, be returned to the people who handed it over.

What is just as important, however, is that the Programme, by continuing with a commitment to a national rent rebate scheme, suggests a continuing policy of high rents. It would not be necessary to have any kind of rebate scheme if rents were kept at a level that everyone could afford and associated with proper pensions and free collective bargaining and price control. Perhaps, though, we ought to expect a freeze on rents, if we were to take literally the many statements made recently by almost every front bench spokesman

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LABOUR MONTHLY FIFTY YEARS AGO

The forthcoming Imperial Conference has been very little talked about. To the Economic Conference which takes place at the same time a considerable amount of attention and space in the press has been allotted. But the Imperial Conference itself has been kept in the background. The press has been studiously vague about it. No politician has heralded its arrival with eloquent orations. As far back as April last the Prime Minister expressly deprecated any discussion in the House of Commons on this subject. One result of this reticence is that the workers are in almost complete ignorance of the significance of this conference or of the issues it will raise. . . .

This reticence is not without good reason. It is felt that, while the power and the majesty and the vast resources of the British empire should be prominently impressed on everyone's mind, it is distinctly dangerous that any of the conflicting policies of that empire should be publicly discussed. Thus, just that very moment when Labour is being reminded of its heavy responsibilities as regards the empire and foreign affairs is chosen to hide the actual politics of the empire and prevent the worker from getting any real idea of that for which he is said to be responsible. Labour is told that it has a responsibility. The nature of that responsibility is not revealed to it, nor the fact that a most precarious position has been reached in the empire's internal politics. In point of fact the thing that Labour is not allowed to know is that the British empire is faced with certain dissolution.

(From 'The Imperial Conference', by R. Page Arnot, *Labour Monthly*, October 1923)

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when they have called on the present government to scrap all rent increases in the current TUC talks. If it is right to make such a call now, does it not follow that, if the call is not heeded, as it certainly will not be, then rents should, at the very least, return to the 1972 levels when we have a Labour administration in power. Otherwise, the present calls for a freeze could be described by less generous persons than myself as somewhat cynical sloganising.

Another glaring omission in the Party's housing policy is the refusal to name a target figure on the number of houses to be built by a future Labour government. 'Too specific,' say the right-wing economists in the movement. The government would, seemingly, be saddled with a *pledge*, and it might not be kept. Yes, the new-found philosophy of the *Socialist Commentary* adherents is that the only way to learn from past failures is to ensure that next time no firm promises should be made. What bankruptcy! Strangely, though, we always have defence targets set and, with an almost monotonous regularity, exceeded!

The Programme has nothing to say on low interest loans for housing, whether it be in the public or private sector. Furthermore, there is no firm policy statement on the question of the public ownership and control of the building and construction industry despite the fact that it has been endorsed by successive conferences in the past. The matter of municipalisation is also one of concern since the statement provides a number of loopholes which, in practice, mean that only in stress areas would local authority become a live issue, and even in those communities escape hatches exist for the property lawyers to exploit. On land, too, there is enough evidence to show that the Housing Committees have not as yet faced up to the necessity for an unequivocal pledge to nationalise *all* urban development land.

A different but equally serious matter that is not referred to in the policy document, although the National Executive have deliberated upon it, is the question of last year's conference resolution, Composite 37, which dealt with the matter of reimbursing councillors who carried out a policy of non-implementation of the despicable, means-testing, poverty-trapping, ghetto-forming, rate-increasing Housing Finance Act. On a card vote at the 1972 Conference, by a majority of almost four to one, the resolution became Party policy, and yet only five members of the 28-strong NEC stood by that decision. Presumably, the others fought, fought and fought again to change conference decisions by voting against, abstaining or staying away! What they have to consider now is the fact that another

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conference has a chance to reaffirm its view on this and on other housing questions as well.

Typically, housing takes up a large slice of the Labour Party Conference agenda and, thankfully, one gets the impression that merely tinkering with the existing system does not figure very prominently in the minds of those in the constituencies and other affiliated bodies. They seem to be asking for a truly socialist housing programme. One that could take the whole issue of providing roofs over people's heads out of the arena of profit and speculation, and put it where it rightly belongs, in the field of social services.

But this kind of action cannot be achieved by merely restating that the Housing Finance Act will be repealed and that a few slums in a few cities will be municipalised. No, the answer lies in the state control of all rented property together with public ownership of house purchasing and house building. We can recall with some pride that it was a Labour government measure that resulted in the setting up of the National Health Service after the second world war, and it is this kind of approach that is needed today in the provision of homes. It would mean local authorities having to administer the whole area of house-buying and financing; it would necessitate the elimination of private enterprise in the building of all homes with, as an added benefit, the operation of the *lump* being dealt a severe blow; those 14 per cent of the total houses still owned by profiteering landlords would, at a stroke, be taken over, and Rent Assessment Committees and the Rent Scrutiny Board (with its TUC representatives) would all be surplus to requirements; instead of a stabilisation fund, local authorities would plan, finance and decide the proportion of house ownership and municipal housing in their localities with ownership and control of all urban development land. Of course, a socialist government would need to plan the overall strategy so as to ensure, for example, that stress areas received their due share of the resources, but not to the extent that constant feeding of the 'magnet' conurbations led to environmental pollution. A broad strategy of this type could not, however, get off the ground without a *minimum* target of half-a-million homes per year.

With a policy of this kind a prospective Labour government could promise and carry through a commitment to provide a decent home for every family and, at the same time, eliminate an area of means-testing that is one of the cancers of present day society. It would enable house-purchasing to be safeguarded but also controlled. Middlemen who have enjoyed the easy profits in buying,

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selling and generally exploiting the property market could follow the money that has been invested in the EEC property deals since they would be without means of support in Britain!

Conference 1973 can make a start to travel down this socialist road and, since it would result in the return of a Labour government, the utopian dream of a Princess Anne house for all young lovers would be commonplace!

(2) THE 1973 TRADES UNION CONGRESS

Joan Maynard*

THE trade union movement continues its leftward march; it is not a headlong rush but it is inexorably moving forward in a left direction.

The first sign: the four million votes cast for the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers' resolution for a complete boycott of the National Industrial Relations Court, a very much more fundamental call than the call to deregister. For the AUEW resolution was saying: Defy a court; defy the law. To support this resolution demanded a clear class understanding. The courts, the laws are made by the ruling class for their class, not for my class, the working class. The crunch line was Hugh Scanlon's reply to those who said 'We must defend our members': 'Yes,' said Hughie, 'we must, but how? Not by attending the NIRC, but by the strength of the organised workers.' Absolutely the matter in a nutshell, for how can you defend workers by using an instrument like the courts, fashioned by the other class for their own protection? In a capitalist society, such as this, the only defence the workers have is their own organised strength. Confusion was sown by the argument that we must represent our members. Nevertheless, a vote of over four million for a complete boycott of the NIRC was a good vote.

Another step forward was the vote for industrial action to help women win equality in pay. For years we have tried to get this resolution through; this year's success means that Congress is moving and that another milestone is passed on the long march to equal pay.

Equally significant was the passing of the resolution calling for

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the TUC to lead industrial protest action as an essential part of the campaign for better pensions. One thing is certain: Heath and his gang will only yield their fundamental rights to pensioners when we put the screw on them by way of industrial action. They are not going to give anything to pensioners who have ceased to produce profit for them and their class, unless they are forced by the industrial might of the organised workers. There could not be a worthier cause: our pensioners need help before next winter or many of them will die of cold and lack of food in this affluent society. To take action on their behalf is to show that we are truly brothers and comrades. As Emerson said: 'Our deeds should speak so loud that they can't hear what we say.'

The other crucial debates were on the talks, the Pay Board and the Common Market. The debate on whether or not we should take part in the present talks with the government was of a very high standard. First-class speeches were made by Ken Gill, Alan Sapper and Alex Kitson. Trade unions are used to negotiating, to talking with the opposition. But on this occasion they are not negotiating with the boss about a wage claim: they are talking to a government that has taken away their right to negotiate freely the best possible wage for their members. They are talking to a government which predetermines wage claims through the Pay Board outside the control of parliament. They are talking to a government which has destroyed our fundamental trade union rights. They are telling that government what the workers' case is, what we want. But this government knows what our case is, it knows what we want, for we have told them on many occasions. We cannot get anything from a bosses' government by talking to them. The aim of the talks is to outmanoeuvre the trade union movement, to lead it into a trap, to help the government to get out of the hole it is in, to help capitalism get out of the hole it is in. How long have the talks been going on? A long time without any result. They provide a breathing space for this reactionary government. They will only concede to the workers not through talks but by our being prepared to use our organised strength when the occasion demands.

Clive Jenkins spelt out the message against the Pay Board, explained how the cards were stacked against the workers before they ever went into negotiation. Delegates, having had, in many cases, direct experience of the Pay Board and how it works, understood these arguments better than those against the talks, and this resolution for no co-operation with the Board gained 4,513,000 votes, losing by only 495,000.

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The debates on the Common Market and trade union participation were crucial. The resolution for continued opposition to the Market was carried overwhelmingly. The danger lay in the other resolution, which referred to the need to strengthen the British trade unions' association with those on the continent and in Europe—when all the time what it really meant was with that part of Europe which is in the EEC. To the utter dismay of the right-wing, this resolution was narrowly defeated, a good omen for the Labour Party Conference. We must still work as hard as possible to mobilise the opposition to the Market. This is slightly easier now than it was, because we are no longer theorising about the Market: we are experiencing its effects, and they are unpleasant to say the least and will get worse. Food prices will continue to rise; the trade gap will widen. The case for renegotiation gets thinner and thinner; certainly, so far, the Tory renegotiations haven't had much effect on Common Market policy and practice, and are not likely to have either. The Market is designed to help the multinationals, to try to bolster up a failing and ailing capitalism. Its purpose is certainly not to help the British people. So the decisions at the TUC were sound, and it is very important that trade union leaders should not get sucked into the vortex of the Common Market; that way lies disaster for the British people.

A concept of worker/directors was slammed at Congress, and rightly so. We don't want the crumbs; we don't want job-enrichment; we don't want participation; we want control which means ownership, real public ownership with real worker control.

The other thing which impressed me at Conference was the way in which the white collar workers put their case, and also their growing militancy. Further, they persuaded Congress to pledge its positive support to affiliated unions if they have to take industrial action to achieve their justified demands. Some of us would like to see more solidarity of this kind, and spelt out more clearly, particularly for the low-paid workers, such as farm workers and hospital workers, to name only two.

A well-thought out strategy is required when you go in to fight the bosses. This is particularly true for the low-paid workers, who are low paid either because they are weakly organised or because they work in a service industry like busmen, postmen or hospital workers. It is high time that those concerned with low-paid workers got together to work out a real plan of campaign and action. Words and pleading with the government for justice and fair play only make us a laughing stock.

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In agriculture, which I know best and which is changing rapidly, we ought to think in terms of food, right from production through to the retail end. Get all those unions together and work out how we can help each other in a positive sense of working together and if necessary acting together. However difficult a problem is, there is always a solution to it, and workers are capable of finding it. It is our job to help them on the way.

It was a good Congress. All the time workers are learning and acting on those lessons. It was no accident that the 'leaders of industry' were present to listen to the debate on the talks with their government, the Tory government. They understand our strength; let us understand it too. More important, let us use it not only to win both better wages and conditions but also to win socialism.

WHAT FUTURE FOR TRADES COUNCILS?

Harry Smith*
Editor of *TASS Journal*
Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers
Technical, Administrative and Supervisory Section

THE 1973 TUC approved a report, entitled *TUC Regional Organisation*, which will have a considerable effect on trades councils. It is expected to be operative by April 1974.

Trades councils have a proud history, often a fierce local pride and a healthy suspicion of authority. In my view it would be fatal if such factors prevent careful consideration of the new proposals and the opportunities they present to trades councils to play a more effective total role in our movement.

The report is quite profound in its analysis of the weaknesses of existing territorial trade union organisation, whether regional advisory committees or trades council structure, if one is not put off by the inevitable TUC report style and some overemphasis of corridors-of-power methods of work. The main proposals affecting trades councils are: 1. To encourage, but not compel, trades councils to merge so as to establish one trades council in each new-style local government district. 2. To replace the 22 existing trades council federations by about 54 county associations of trades councils, with variations or TUC assistance where counties have few trades councils. 3. To replace existing TUC regional advisory committees

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by eight regional advisory committees for England and one for Wales, related to governmental 'economic planning regions'. Lay representation is to be encouraged. Trades councils are to provide 25 per cent of the members of regional councils, chosen by county associations, as a right. Regional councils can propose increased representation for consideration by the General Council of the TUC. 4. The Trades Council Joint Consultative Committee is to be enlarged from 12 to 18 representatives, nine each from the trades councils and from the TUC General Council. 5. The Annual Conference of Trades Councils is to continue substantially in its present form.

Organisation in Wales would differ in some respects from that in England, in recognition that Wales is a nation. The TUC regional body would be known as the Wales Trade Union Council and would operate through an Annual Conference of about 300 delegates, one-third chosen by the 57 trades councils in Wales.

Lesser proposals cover organisational detail, staffing, financial assistance and other points.

Other than the London Trades Council, whose future the General Council are still considering, individual trades councils will be little affected in their internal arrangements and local work. The recommendation to merge some adjacent trades councils should be considered on a judgement whether the resulting larger bodies are likely to serve the local community of workers more effectively. This may well be so where existing trades councils are small and weak.

County associations in effect would perform the same general functions as the existing federations, with some new responsibilities and being expected more effectively to translate policies into pressure on the new county councils.

The functions of the Trades Council Joint Consultative Committee and the Annual Conference of Trades Councils are not altered basically.

The proposed formation of regional advisory committees, involving trades councils in their structure, is the most radical proposal. A close reading of the TUC report shows that the TUC is in part responding to the need for effective local organisation to represent and campaign for its policies. Here are some pertinent abstracts:

> Several regional advisory committees . . . have given the impression that they are little more than talking shops for union officials.
>
> . . . democracy does not merely reside in casting a vote at intervals, but . . . in various groups making their views known and demanding that their interests be taken into account.
>
> An extension of the TUC's regional machinery is therefore necessary to co-ordinate union activity in the regions.

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There are several messages here! We must remember that this year's TUC passed five major policy resolutions calling for campaigns and action led by the TUC itself. In part, the new structure is a response to such pressures. The structure proposed is a positive step, in that it involves trades councils, with all their vitality, in the new structure, at the same time as leaving their existing functions and contacts virtually intact. Thus, the proposals represent a possible enlargement of influence of trades councils, somewhat similar to their role in the Scottish TUC.

At different stages of development of the trade union and labour movement the organic relationship of trades councils to that movement has changed out of experience and necessity. It will today be accepted that trades councils can no longer have that relationship which suited a condition of local trade union organisation, before the emergence of national trade unions and the founding of the TUC and of the Labour Party. The historically recent centralisation of trades council structure under the TUC caused bitter struggle and problems over 40 years. The then total right-wing domination of the TUC, its witch-hunting, its chronic parliamentary style of work, total lack of leadership in struggle, and other related factors, all tended to mask the fact that an underlying necessity was working through. At a time when the movement is steadily forcing leadership changes and is pushing the TUC towards leadership in struggle, the necessity for change should be more clearly seen.

As always in the past the closeness of trades councils to the workers is the guarantee that they will always reflect their needs and expectations. The new structure can be used to turn their resulting vitality into deeper and wider influence for advance.

Trades councils have a magnificent history. Many honours are inscribed on their battle flags. Original directing centres and organisers of our infant movement, part-founders of the TUC and Labour Party, leaders of the 'Hands off Russia' campaign, organising centres in the general strike, devoutly anti-fascist, against unemployment, against the Vietnam war, opposing the Industrial Relations Act and pay freeze, for increased pensions and much else—the storm-cocks of our movement at all stages. Their grass-roots vitality will ensure that there is still more to come. They will play a vital role in ending Tory rule and leading the march along the British road to socialism.

It is my belief that the new structure will assist these processes, if we understand and seize the opportunities they offer. Of course, this must also mean a critical as well as a practical involvement.

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TRANSPORT—THE VALUE OF TIME SAVING

Phil Goodwin

THERE is no doubt that transport planning involves political issues. The balance between investment in public and private transport, the decisions about whether to build new roads in towns (and if so whose homes should be knocked down), plans on closing off residential areas to traffic (but thereby possibly diverting the traffic through someone else's residential area), bus-only lanes, parking charges, restrictions on cars, higher fares, subsidised fares . . . all these involve problems which are not simply technical matters of 'getting the number right', but broad, general questions of ideology and—often—vested interest.

But although these are not *only* technical questions, the technical aspects should not be ignored. After all, in the public enquiry on the 'motorway box' and other plans for London advanced by the Greater London Council (the old Council, that is, before the Conservatives lost to Labour largely because of this one issue), many of the most effective criticisms were based on questions of technique and accuracy. The plan was not only politically unacceptable—the numbers were wrong as well.

A recent book on the subject by Ian G. Heggie* provides a useful opportunity to stand back from the political 'buses versus cars' and 'road versus rail' battles and look at the science of transport studies. The title of the book is itself significant—*Transport Engineering Economics*. The point is this: unlike many other fields of economic theory, economics in transport has concerned itself with relationships, formulas, quantities *that can be measured.*

From a theoretical point of view, this is altogether a good development. What has happened is that questions of ideology and theory have not become confused and concealed by the numbers, but have become on the contrary more open, easier to examine—and more likely to be rejected if found inadequate. Not that all these problems have been solved, by a long way. This can be seen if we look at just one aspect of the frontier between ideology and technical detail—how savings in travel time are taken account of in transport studies.

Savings in time are one of the most important features of transport

* *Transport Engineering Economics*, Ian G. Heggie, *McGraw Hill*, 266 pp, £6.25.

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improvements, whether it is an international airline, a motorway, rail electrification or a bus-only lane. But time savings are measured in hours, and the cost of building the improvement is (at present, anyway) measured in pounds. How can they be related? How do we decide whether it is worth spending £1 million in order to save 3 million hours? In other words, what is the value of time?

In terms of the relative importance of different aspects of a transport improvement (savings in petrol, engine-wear, etc) it is the time saving that often dominates all others—70 to 90 per cent of all benefits in an early study of the M1 in 1960, 80 per cent of all benefits estimated in 1963 for London's Victoria Line, 34 to 38 per cent of all benefits in Roskill's study of the third London airport. All large-scale transportation studies for a whole area, especially those which have come out in increasing number since about 1969—Merseyside, West Yorkshire, SELNEC (South-East Lancashire North-East Cheshire), West Midlands, and so on—have made great efforts, with more or less success, to measure and put a value on the time savings they expect. The Department of the Environment has made a fairly detailed list of recommendations about the way those calculations should be carried out.

At present, the question is tackled in two main ways, depending on whether the time savings are within working hours, or outside working hours.

Take travel in working time first—i.e. what you do in time you are getting paid for, normally carrying out the employer's business. The idea is that, if you save some of this time, the extra time will be used for increased production. What is an hour's production worth? Usually it is assumed that the value of an extra hour's production is equal to the average wage for an hour—so time saved during working hours is valued at the wage rate. But this does not have to be the average wage rate: the Roskill Report on the third London airport, for example, considered (quite rightly) that the sort of people who make international air journeys during working hours are hardly likely to be on the average wage rate. In the calculations, the Roskill Report used a value for these time savings based on the average salary of jet-set businessmen, and this is one of the reasons why that report favoured an airport as near London as possible—because even quite a small saving in time appeared to be worth so much money.

This whole approach is only valid on two conditions: 1. that the businessman is going to *work* during the time saved (not stay in bed

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an hour longer); 2. that his wage measures the value of the work he does. You might come to your own conclusions about how true these statements are.*

What about travel outside working hours? Here the transport planner is faced with a quandary. It is a fact that rich people are prepared to spend more to save 10 minutes travel time than poor people are. That is hardly surprising. If one tried to make predictions about traffic increases that did not take account of this, the predictions would be wrong.

The question is: does that mean that rich people's leisure time is *worth* more than poor people's leisure time? Or put it another way: is car travellers' time worth more than bus travellers' time? Until about 1969, this was indeed assumed, but the Ministry of Transport then decided that a technique which seemed to be based on such blatant inequality was not acceptable, and now everybody's leisure time (but not working time) is considered to be worth the same when transport projects are planned.

All this is important both from a theoretical and a practical point of view.

Practically, the way these problems can affect day-to-day living conditions is that different theories will lead to the choice of different transport policies. If it is assumed that, say, a car traveller's time is worth more than a bus passenger's time, then a traffic management scheme favouring cars may be chosen in preference to a bus-only lane—even if the bus scheme saved more time. It is not so long since such an approach formed part of official policy, and even now there are some who favour a return to this philosophy and the detailed techniques that arise from it.

It can be seen that the problems described here reflect underlying differences between opposing economic theories. The question, 'Can the wage rate be used as a measure of the value of a worker's work?', for example, is basically the same question as 'Do workers receive in wages an amount equal to the value they produce?' And you can only answer yes to *that* question if you believe that workers produce no surplus value.

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* The second statement—that the value of work is measured by the wage rate—caused a fascinating problem when the Ministry of Transport tried to work out a 'value of human life' to use in traffic accident studies. The trouble was that women on average were 'worth' less, measured by their wages, than the amount they consumed in their lifetime. So the economy seemed to be better off the more women lost their lives in accidents! By the same token, landlords and shareholders, who only lived off unearned income, were worth nothing at all! The Ministry of Transport did not act on either of these conclusions, but have now changed their method of calculation.

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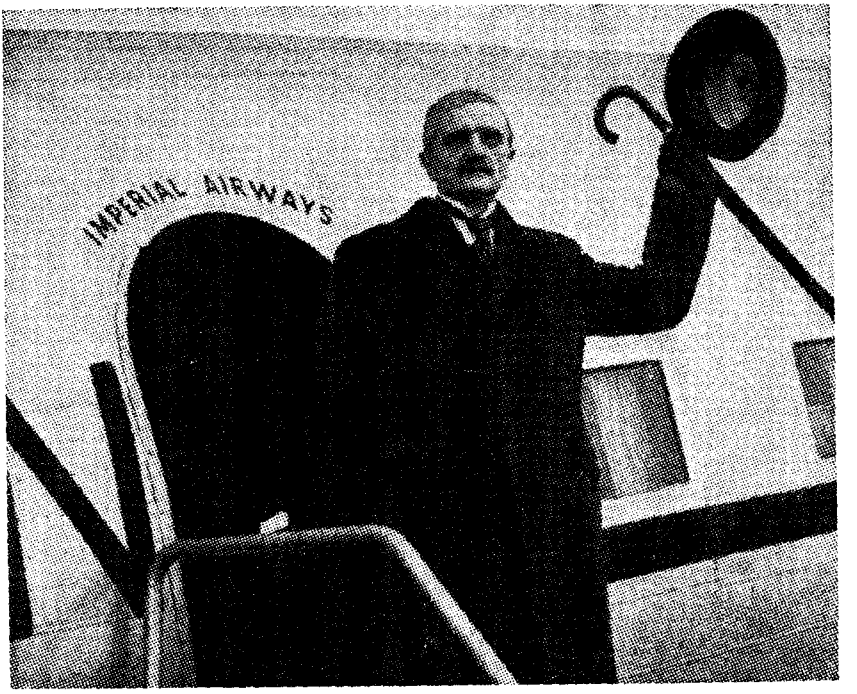
MUNICH I



The Days of Betrayal

Brian Baxter, deputy programme director of the National Film Theatre, writes:

Otakar Vávra is one of the most respected Czechoslovak directors, and his massive new work, *The Days of Betrayal*, demands to be taken seriously on that count as well as because of its subject. Also, at well over three hours in running time and as the most expensive Czech film yet, it is surely destined for a world market. Hopefully it will appear in the November London Film Festival and secure a British release. It was quite well received at the Moscow Film Festival in July. The subject is the Munich crisis which preceded the second world war. Vávra has achieved a painstaking, minutely reconstructed dramatised documentary. Events, characters, settings and the atmosphere of these sad weeks are all caught with intelligence and accuracy. It is too wordy to be great cinema, and probably doesn't seek to rise above its sturdy, unoriginal but honourable brief. What is remarkable about the movie is the success of the characterisations and the brilliant welding together of the events in Vávra's own screenplay. No doubt its bitter attitude towards the British and the French will raise unhappy memories and old controversies. Even so, for its intelligence and the seriousness of its approach, it deserves to be seen.

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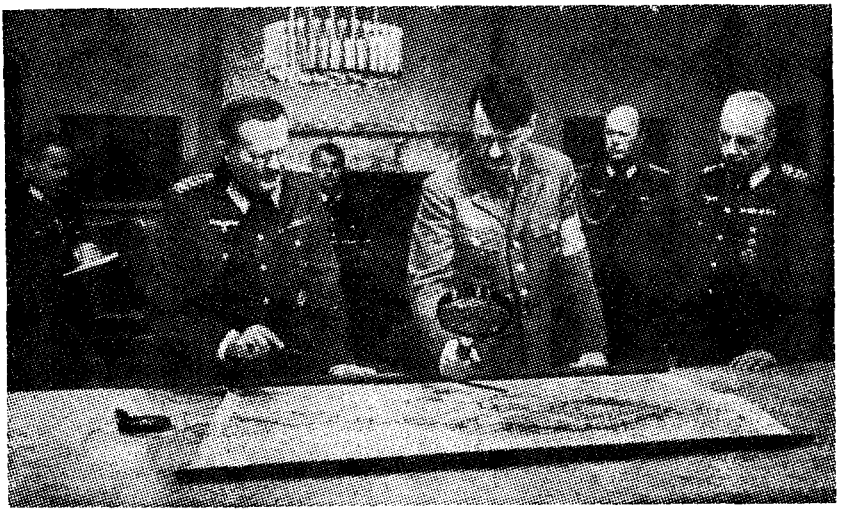
8 IN FILM



The events of 35 years ago portrayed in the film, and recalled for *LM* readers by Academician Maisky in the series concluded in our last issue, emphasise the will of the Czechoslovak people to defend their country in face of Nazi plans for occupation and British and French betrayal. Neville Chamberlain is played by Jaroslav Radimecky, and Hitler by the Swedish actor Gunnar Möller.

Pictures from *Czechoslovak Film*, No. 2, 1973

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THE 11 PER CENT FRAUD

Alan Brown

SO, the face of capitalism becomes less acceptable than ever for millions of people. Their basic need for shelter now carries the usurious interest rate of 11 per cent. Those who ushered in the Tory 'property-owning democracy' have a larger ball and chain tied round their necks, and there is no escape for them to any other form of housing. They are trapped. Had 'home ownership' been a social revolution, and not just a confidence trick perpetrated on behalf of speculators and money-lenders, it would have been the most expensive one in British history. Many people are now paying more to building societies (non-profit making, of course) than they earned ten years ago. House-building itself slows down, pressures increase on the existing stock of homes, both rents and mortgage payments spiral upwards, and parasitism in Britain takes another step towards a total stranglehold over the people. Heath says that building society financing must be made more 'flexible'—but the talk is of 14 per cent.

One thing was always certain—that as the number of people buying their homes through building societies grew to major proportions, they would provide a captive pool of sitting ducks, an ideal target for the Tories who started their 'dear money' policies in their first post-war government from 1951 onwards. Up to that time, Bank Rate (recently renamed 'minimum lending rate' when it became widely known and synonymous with high Tory prices and interest rates) had remained at 2 per cent since the early thirties, with only one blip to 4 per cent in 1939. The Tories edged it up in erratic fashion during the 1950s to 7 per cent, and the then apparently controllable inflation helped them fight and win the 'never had it so good' election of 1959. Since then, interest rates have gone upwards in stages until the government rate today is the all time record level of 11½ per cent. The beast gets more profitable for the money-lenders and speculators, but casts a shadow over the politicians. Mr Peyton, Transport Minister, tells us (*Times*, July 14) that if things go on the way they are 'the conclusion will be ruin, and it will not be long in coming.' Inflation, he says, could loosen the fabric of British society 'in a way war has never done.'

Since the fifties, millions have been persuaded to 'buy' their own homes. There was the attraction of escaping the well-hated grip of

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avaricious landlords, the feeling that one's outgoings would be known for the period of the mortgage, and the expectation that, at the end, one would have a rent free retirement. But capitalism doesn't work like that, and for many the con trick has led them round in a complete circle until they are worse off than had they been able to find a house to rent. They were persuaded to 'buy', to have their 'independence', to pay against the day when they deposited the deeds with the bank, sat back and pulled up the drawbridge. But what has happened? As prices have rocketted, together with interest rates, so the difficulties have increased, particularly for the young and the poorly paid. The general rule was that you could borrow only so much money that your monthly repayments did not exceed your weekly income. Very nice. The building societies were safeguarding people against taking on more debt than they could handle. And then the interest rates went up and up—so much so that the payments became crippling and people were given the option of extending the length of their mortgage and keeping their payments the same. Not generosity on the part of the societies, but understanding. All very nice, until the day comes when interest rates are so high that previous payments either cover only a microscopic amount of capital repayment, or fail to cover even the accruing interest itself.

That stage has now been reached for a good proportion of home-buyers, particularly those with longer term mortgages, where little capital is paid off in the early years anyway. So, for someone with a 25 year repayment period, the increase in interest rates from $9\frac{1}{2}$ to 11 per cent gives the following choice: either pay up, or extend the period of repayment from 25 to no less than 57 years and three months. From age 20 to 77, or from 30 to 87. And what happens to the repayments when income is reduced to an old age pension? Will the supplementary benefits system cover them? Or will people be told (as they are today when their rents are sky-high) to find somewhere cheaper to live? What price then the 'independence' that was supposed to come from following Tory arguments about 'thrift'? But there is another possibility—that a person is paying into a company pension scheme. Perhaps this will take care of the mortgage in old age? Maybe so, but in that case the payments to the company scheme cannot any longer be regarded as pension savings—they are an extra part of today's mortgage payments. Bare-faced fraud and political chicanery could scarcely go further.

But it can go a little further. Consider the case of a young couple who have started a 30-year mortgage in the late 'teens or early twenties, due

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to be paid off just before their retirement. One day the excited young bride tells her husband she is expecting a baby. Things will be tough financially, but they are overjoyed. And that evening on the telly they find that their mortgage rate has gone up from 9½ to 11 per cent. They can't find the extra, the wife will have to stop working at least for a time, and there will be another mouth to feed. Can they extend the length of their mortgage and leave their payments the same? Yes. And for how long will it then run? For ever—because at 11 per cent they pay back none of the capital at all with payments linked to 9½ per cent. They only pay interest, and the capital remains as high as ever. For this couple the fraud is complete. They started out to 'buy' a house; they paid a deposit; they now have a house which (because of legal costs, etc.) they cannot even afford to move out of. Their own or their parents' savings have gone in the deposit. They are worse off in every way than had they been able to rent a house. They may never 'own' anything, never have the deeds, and only hand the debt over to their children when they pass on. House 'purchase' has become, effectively, rent—except that it has all the worst features of purchase attached to it. The number of people caught in this trap would multiply many times with a 14 per cent rate.

Many of course will pay. It will mean going short on other things, but they have no alternative. For them, the fraud is straightforwardly pernicious. They 'only' have to be fleeced. But let us not pass over them too quickly, for they constitute the great majority, and there is a sleight of hand here which the Tory propagandists—who still talk about the 'cheapness' of house-buying—seek to conceal. Two processes have been going on over the past 20 years: first, the price of houses has trebled and more; second, the mortgage rate has doubled—and the effect of these is to multiply together. So that a house in the middle fifties needing a £4,000 mortgage—even after the rate had been pushed up to 6 per cent—would have meant a monthly payment of £29 over 20 years. An identical house today would need a mortgage of at least £12,000, and with an 11 per cent interest rate would give a monthly payment of £125 over 20 years—more than four times as much.

This is not the occasion to spell out the alternative policies (greatly increased house-building, controlled low interest rates, finance through the government and not private money-lending avenues, etc) but the lesson is plain enough. For years the Tories have tried to drive wedges between people 'buying' their houses and those renting them—particularly the council house tenants. With this latest onslaught on house-buyers, coupled with the Housing Finance

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Act against council tenants, it was never clearer than now that, no matter how people pay for the roof over their heads, they are all prey to a system which squeezes the last possible drop of blood out of them. The methods of attack vary accordingly, but the purpose is the same. And it is the same class, backed by the same party, which oppresses all.

BOB STEWART

February 10, 1877—September 14, 1973

Peter Kerrigan

BOB STEWART's death breaks one of the longest living links in a chain of revolutionary struggle bridging two centuries. Even a brief factual record of the highlights of his tempestuous career would fill many pages. Scottish prohibitionist socialist, skilled carpenter, trade union organiser, conscientious objector in world war one, four times imprisoned for his refusal to fight, foundation member of the Communist Party and its first parliamentary candidate at Caerphilly in 1921, for many years on its Central Committee, and one-time Acting General Secretary, delegate to the Communist International, active on South Africa and Ireland, always in the thick of the struggle whether as parliamentary candidate fighting Churchill in Dundee or elsewhere in mass demonstrations of the unemployed and at political meetings.

Bob carried on his varied activities with unflagging energy and enthusiasm, until a few years ago when advancing years and the onset of blindness confined him to his room. The documented record appears, complete with dates and brief explanations, in James Klugmann's first two volumes, *History of the Communist Party of Great Britain*, and, in more detail, written by Bob himself in his autobiography, *Breaking the Fetters*, published by Lawrence & Wishart in 1967. I want to speak of him from my own personal experience because this may be a contribution to creating a more complete picture of the whole man.

I will always remember my first meeting with him. It was in 1921. I had been paid off from my job in engineering and was chairman of the Springburn branch of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement. We held a weekly meeting in the Princes Picture House, with invited speakers like Pat Quinlan and others mentioned by Bob in his book. The speakers had to climb a ladder from the

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orchestra stalls to a narrow strip of platform on which was a table and two chairs in front of the picture screen. Up the ladder came this man, with the striking face, a long, rather badly broken nose and piercing eyes.

My most lasting impression was the speech and method of delivery. No one I have listened to since could do so effectively what he did. He would break away from the main theme to make a witty or acid comment. Sometimes he would develop the point, but always he would return to the main content. The thread was never broken, and when he had finished you were left in possession of the case he was making in its entirety. Of course, there were better orators than Bob Stewart, men like Harry Pollitt, Willie Gallacher and Tom Mann, to mention only some. But he was supreme in the way I have just mentioned.

He had an undying hatred of capitalism and its oppression, and could be devastating in criticism when he felt it necessary. One example comes to mind during this period. It was 1922 in Glasgow, when he was Scottish Organiser of the Communist Party. At that time there were a number of Party members, of whom I was one, who were strongly opposed to the Party decision to apply for affiliation to the Labour Party. We were at a Party conference and Bob read out the letter of resignation from one of them, which ended by saying that in the meantime he proposed to go back to his books. I shall never forget the way he spoke of anyone dropping out of all activity and 'going back to his books' in the situation then confronting us. On the other hand, Bob was always prepared to help us younger, inexperienced and impetuous ones, with guidance and advice. He would listen carefully and then deal with the arguments showing how the particular problem could be solved, and often with a personal example or anecdote.

Bob was always a staunch trade unionist from his apprenticeship days when, in his last year, he joined the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners. He was elected to the yard management committee at Gourley's Shipyard, Dundee. However, he left because the employers offered to continue his job for a year at the improver's rate ten shillings below the basic journeyman's rate. From job to job, until, back in Dundee again, he became shop steward at Gourley's where he also worked on building the *Discovery*, which took Captain Scott on the national Antarctic expedition. It was in this period that Bob met and married Margaret Lang, and commenced a partnership which lasted till her death forty-eight years later, and to whom he pays tribute in the foreword to his book. I suppose in one

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way the high point of Bob's earlier trade union activities came in 1915 during the first world war when he became local organiser of the Scottish Horse and Motormen's Union, at a wage of 30 shillings a week, and went back into the trades council as a delegate. He would have been about 38 years of age at the time. He lost that job when, in 1916, he received his first prison sentence for having conscientious objections to killing his fellow men in an imperialist war and refusing to do military service.

I have dwelt briefly on these aspects of Bob Stewart's career because the more outstanding political features are on the record and are better known to those who have been colleagues or have studied the history of the Communist Party and the British labour movement. Bob was an outstanding political leader, tested many times in class battles. He was a staunch internationalist and life-long friend and supporter of the Soviet Union. As I will always remember him, he was a great humanist, whose memory will be cherished as long as we who knew him live.

CHILE—BACKGROUND TO THE COUP

Kate Clark

(Kate Clark, who, at the time of the rebellion by the armed forces, was teaching at the University of Chile, despatched this article on Wednesday, September 5, six days before the coup took place—Ed. *LM)*

MY aim in writing this article is to throw some light on what lies behind the difficult situation which Chile is experiencing at the present time. It is now three years since the Popular Unity government headed by Dr Salvador Allende was elected. During these three years extremely deep transformations in the economic and social structure of the country have taken place. Chile's minerals, her biggest industries, her banks and the *latifundios* now belong to the people, and the workers are enjoying increasing participation in management, although the government recognises that still more has to be done to achieve a greater level of participation.

It is precisely this daring policy of transformation which has brought about the backwash of opposition from the capitalist and landowning classes. The class struggle has reached its sharpest point since the government took office, and this is the explanation for the

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present critical situation which faces Chile today. The displaced industrialists, bankers and landowners are playing their last cards in a desperate bid to overthrow the government so as to be able to recover their previous properties and continue to live on the profits produced by the exploitation of the Chilean people. Chile's revolutionary process has provoked the same reaction from the enemies of the people—the Chilean ruling class and US imperialism—as the Russian revolution did at the beginning of the century, when the capitalist classes of fourteen countries sent troops into Soviet Russia to crush the revolution, or as the Cuban revolution did thirteen years ago. Those who do not understand what revolution means attack the Chilean Popular Unity government and accuse the government of 'reformism' and 'betrayal of revolutionary principles' . . . I would ask, if the Popular Unity government is reformist, and if the process that is going on in Chile today is not revolutionary, then why are the Chilean ruling class and US imperialism engaged in an all-out war on the Popular Unity government?

The government has got quite a few problems on its hands at the moment, which have been created by the political opposition with the aim, now more and more express, of causing the downfall of the government: the lorry-owners' (not lorry-drivers, as the *Times* calls them) strike, now well over a month old, which has meant losses of more than £12 million and lack of seeds and fertilizers for the spring sowing; the increasing acts of terrorism, such as dynamiting of bridges, power stations, oil and gas pipelines, railways and other installations, all of which have caused the deaths of some seven workers since the beginning of the strike; the criminal strike in sympathy with the lorry-owners' strike of doctors and hospital staff; the strike of shopowners, again in sympathy with the lorry-owners.

The fact that this strike is a political one has been proved again and again, and nobody even tries to deny it any more. Now the lorry-owners' union is even talking of continuing the strike indefinitely, until there is a change of government. The government has given a solution to all the original demands the lorry-owners' union presented at the beginning of the strike, and yet the strike goes on—they are not interested in solutions; what they want is to overthrow the government.

The opposition majority in Congress is continuing its obstructionist attitude. The bill for the annual 'readjustment' bonus awarded to all wage-earners as compensation for the loss of buying power due to inflation, was passed by Congress, but without the necessary financial backing. Thus the government has been obliged to issue more paper

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money to cover the readjustment bonus, which in turn means increasing inflation.

Similarly, the opposition have prevented a bill being passed to deal with the black marketeers and speculators, and so the problem continues to exist and grows, since there is no adequate legislation to make these offences punishable by law. The public has to pay double or even treble the official price in order to obtain the articles which are in short supply.

In short, the opposition has consistently opposed every initiative the government has presented in Congress.

One of the most sinister acts of the opposition was the recent so-called 'Agreement Bill', passed by the opposition majority in Congress, which sets out to prove that the government has acted unconstitutionally and is practically illegal, and pretends to force the resignation of the President on these grounds. Whilst this bill has no legal validity, since Congress can only oust a president if there is a two-thirds majority in favour, it is nevertheless important in the sense that it is intended to cause confusion amongst the armed forces. The right-wing newspaper, *El Mercurio*, in its edition of August 26, put it this way:

> The most significant thing in the Agreement Bill is that, after the solid reasons given in parliament, the President cannot continue to use the obligation of military obedience to make the armed forces collaborate in carrying out his programme.

The tactic of the right is clear—to make the armed forces feel that they no longer owe allegiance to the government because this government has been 'proved' unconstitutional, i.e. to prepare the ground for a *coup d'état*.

What is the situation as regards the armed forces? I am sure readers must find many of the news reports confusing and even contradictory. For instance, many of the searches for arms which have been effected by the armed forces have been carried out in headquarters of parties which are in the government, the Communist Party headquarters in Valparaíso, for example, where some Party members in the building were even taken prisoner!

These searches—one of which resulted in the death of a worker in the state-owned 'Lanera Austral' factory in the southern city of Punta Arenas, when troops with tanks and machine-guns carried out a military operation, destroying valuable machinery and forcing the workers to lie face to the ground during the search—have caused considerable indignation on the part of the Popular Unity, since not only have no arms been found, which is only to be expected since it

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is not the Popular Unity forces who are armed, but it is well known *who* are the people who really are armed and who are busy carrying out acts of terrorism up and down the country. And yet the armed forces have effected very few searches against the right-wing and fascist organisations.

This is indeed one of the contradictions of the 'Chilean road'. The left is in the government, and yet it is the left who are suffering from the searches. . . . The right are carrying out terrorist acts every day, and practically nothing happens to them.

The armed forces, according to their formation and tradition, are 'constitutionalist', that is, they bear allegiance to whatever government has been elected according to the constitution and laws of the country, and they are 'professional', that is, not deliberative, not political, but obedient to the constitutional authority. This explains why the armed forces have the faculty of carrying out these searches, under the Law on Control of Firearms. but the government cannot interfere with the way the armed forces go about the job. Obviously within the senior ranks of the armed forces there is a majority of men with right-wing tendencies, and this explains why the left has been victim of these searches and arrests. Had it not been for the constitutionalist stand of the armed forces during these three years, and the existence of the tremendously powerful trade union movement, the extreme right would have brought off a *coup* long ago.

It is clear that the bigger the support that the government enjoys, the greater the government's authority. This is the urgent task of the Popular Unity in the present situation—to win more support, to win allies among the working class sectors of the Christian Democratic Party, to strengthen the backing for the government, so as to bar the way to a *coup d'état* which would inevitably mean a civil war.

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SOUTH AFRICA—TRADE UNION STRUGGLE

John Gaetsewe*

THE murder of twelve Black miners by the South African police follows a year which has witnessed the intensification of the fight for higher wages and better conditions by many groups of workers in South Africa, and also a heightening of the political consciousness of our people.

The wave of strikes which took place in 1972 and early this year, involving more than 100,000 African, Coloured and Indian workers, voiced their long-standing grievances. Trade unionists in Britain and throughout the world must now reconsider the appeal which has been made, not only by the South African Congress of Trade Unions, but by the whole international trade union movement which was represented at the International Trade Union Conference Against Apartheid in Geneva in June 1973.

This conference was attended by members of the United Nations Special Committee on Apartheid, members of the Organisation of African Unity, the governing body of the International Labour Organisation, the three international trade union centres—the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the World Federation of Trade Unions, and the World Confederation of Labour —and other continental and regional trade union federations. For the first time since 1945, the three main international centres, with 380 delegates representing 250 million workers, came together to discuss the policy of apartheid; and the British TUC delegation played an important role in bringing together the two main centres, the ICFTU and the WFTU, at a round table to prepare for the success of this conference.

During the conference, every speaker without exception denounced the South African racist policy of apartheid as a threat to free trade unionism, a violation of the Human Rights Charter and a danger to world peace. The following resolutions were adopted unanimously:

> Conference calls upon governments, non-governmental organisations, workers and their trade union organisations, political parties and institutions at all levels, to launch and intensify a campaign for an all-round isolation of

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the racist régime of South Africa, economically, politically, militarily and culturally.

Conference expresses its full support and solidarity with the African workers of South Africa who have courageously taken strike action against their intolerable conditions, and unequivocally condemns the system of works committees, which cannot in any way be regarded as a substitute for genuine trade unions.

Another important resolution of the conference called for the immediate unconditional release of all imprisoned trade unionists and political prisoners in South Africa and for a stop to the rule of police terror and oppression. Before the news of the police attack on the miners, it had been suggested that one step in the implementation of the conference decisions could be a world-wide week of action to coincide with the 25th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, on December 10, 1973. The response by trade union bodies to the recent outrage reflects a need also for immediate action.

I would like here to convey sincere thanks, on behalf of SACTU, to British, including particularly Scottish, trade unions who have earlier contributed morally and materially to our struggle, both at national and branch level. The 1972 Congress of the British TUC reaffirmed its stand against apartheid and unanimously adopted a resolution (1) in favour of withdrawal of trade union funds from those companies with subsidiaries in South Africa, (2) to discourage emigration, and (3) to support the liberation movements. National trade unions which have supported us include the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, with its Foundry, Construction, Technical and Engineering Sections, the National Union of Public Employees, the Association of Cinematograph, Television and allied Technicians, the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen, the Society of Graphical and Allied Trades, the Civil and Public Services Association, the Fire Brigades Union and the Tobacco Workers' Union. Branches of ASTMS, NALGO and APEX have also supported us, as well as the Scottish Trades Union Congress, with many of its trades councils. There are many others.

Some of the unions mentioned above had funds in companies operating in South Africa and took steps to withdraw those funds. The TUC itself has already sold its shares. This is a practical step which in fact influenced the Geneva conference to look for various forms of action against apartheid.

In the present situation, SACTU appeals to trade unions to take

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immediate action to protest at the killings and for the implementation of the Geneva decisions by issuing press statements, sending letters and telegrams to the South African government, and by organising meetings and conferences. We urge the British trade union movement to study the resolutions adopted by the representatives of 250 million workers who participated in the Geneva conference, and to discuss ways and means of implementing these resolutions.

The actions by British trade unionists mentioned above have shown our workers at home that they have friends, and this has encouraged them in their struggle for freedom and peace for all South Africans, irrespective of race, colour or creed, and an end to the brutal system of apartheid.

INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR OF RAIL TRADE UNIONS

Bill Ronksley
Executive Committee member
Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen

LES FELTON, ASLEF President, Ray Buckton, General Secretary, and I attended an international seminar of rail trade unions on labour and health protection which was held in Moscow from May 26 to 29, 1973, as the representatives of ASLEF. The National Union of Railwaymen was represented by Frank Cannon, Assistant General Secretary and Executive Committee members Atkinson and Prendergast; and the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association by Percy Coldrick, General Secretary, and Executive Committee members Cooper and Thompson. This constructive, hardworking and friendly seminar was attended by 91 delegates representing 48 trade unions from 30 countries, plus four representatives from the International Federation of Trade Unions (Transport) and one from the International Labour Office.

In view of the fact that the trade unions represented are members either of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions or of the World Federation of Trade Unions, or are not affiliated to any international trade union organisation, this was probably the most representative gathering of the leaders of the world's railworkers since the 'cold war' was used as a pretext to divide them.

The venue of the seminar was appropriate as the railways of the

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USSR hold the leading place in the transport system of that vast country, are the most important railways in the world, and are extremely advanced in the field of labour and health protection.

Kovalev, the President of the Railworkers' Trade Union of the USSR, in opening the seminar expressed the hope that, irrespective of the different orientation of the trade unions represented, we would build unity in the fight for improvements in the safety and working conditions of railworkers in all countries. The 'President', as we were to call him during our stay, proved to be an excellent colleague, both in the seminar and when we mixed socially. He played a major part in making the seminar a success.

During the course of the seminar several papers were presented by delegates, including the following: 'Labour protection of the personnel working in traffic—the role of the trade unions' (Italy and the USSR), 'Electric safety on the railways' (Railway Sector of the CGSR, Belgium), 'Working and leisure time of railway employees—the role of trade unions' (National Federation of Railwaymen—CGT, France), 'Special clothes and means of individual protection for widely spread railway trades' (Railwaymen's Union of the Federal Republic of Germany), 'Health protection of railwaymen. Ergonomics. The role of trade unions' (Railwaymen's Union of the German Democratic Republic), 'Health service on railways' (Railway Transport Workers' Union, USSR).

Les Felton in his contribution to the seminar drew attention to the current difficulties in Britain associated with the high speed diesel train and advanced passenger train trials, and also our opposition to the inadequate non-functional small-windowed cabs of these trains. He outlined our procedure on safety and the role of the trade unions, the problems of diesel noise and fumes, and the dangers of asbestos dust when this material is used for the purpose of insulation of cabs and trains. Jim Prendergast in his contribution said that although the trade unions have no control over safety on British Rail, nevertheless British Rail have a good safety record. He welcomed the seminar and hoped it would not only lead to better health protection but also to greater trade union unity. In my contribution I pointed out the importance of automatic coupling in so far as safety is concerned, and expressed disappointment at the fact that British Rail is not to go over to this type of coupling when the majority of other railways do so.

The chair at the seminar was taken by the leaders of a number of trade unions in rotation, and on May 27 Ray Buckton was appointed. With Frank Cannon and Percy Coldrick, he also par-

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ticipated in the committees set up to draft two documents, a 'Memorandum' and an 'Appeal', which were adopted by a large majority during the closing session of the seminar.

The Memorandum refers to the modern state of technical development on railways and expresses the view that labour and health protection should be improved upon. It also highlights the accidents which still occur on the railways of the world, particularly on the lines and stations as well as on the maintenance of overhead equipment and other associated equipment on electrified lines. The dangers associated with constantly increasing speeds are also referred to. Other health hazards dealt with in the Memorandum are irregular distribution of work during the day, psychological and emotional factors, noise and vibration. Railworkers in all countries are urged to campaign for a number of items which are listed.

Finally the Memorandum calls upon the ILO, ministries of transport and railway administrations to observe existing labour and health protection regulations and to give priority to safety, over savings and profitability.

With a view to the improvement of labour and health protection, the Appeal adopted by the seminar calls upon the trade unions to pay particular attention to certain problems. In the penultimate and final paragraphs of the Appeal the seminar expresses the view that the contributions of the participants and the exchange of experiences has made a contribution to the solving of problems of railworkers in the field of health and labour protection, and calls on all participating and non-participating unions to propagate the deliberations of the seminar and to make railway administrations take measures aimed at the solution of the aforementioned problems in order to improve the welfare of all railworkers. The Appeal also states that the seminar is considered to be an important enterprise, and further seminars should be held in the future. Subsequently, Philip Seibert, President of the Railway Workers' Union of the Federal Republic of Germany, proposed that the next seminar should be held in 1974 in the FRG, and that his union should act as host. The proposition was greeted with acclamation.

In my view, the deliberations of the seminar should be discussed by railworkers and their representatives at all levels. The Executive Committee of our Society will be giving the subject matter serious attention with a view to progressing the decisions of the seminar which are relevant to railworkers in this country. It is our duty to play our part in this noble crusade for improved labour and health protection of railworkers in every country in the world.

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FIFTY YEARS IN HALF-AN-HOUR

Ivor Montagu

HOW, for the best, to compress fifty years into half-an-hour—this is a technical problem fit to puzzle any technician it confronts. Of course, it depends on the quality of the fifty years. Not so difficult, perhaps, if we are dealing with this period in the life of one of those sessile sea-creatures that have remained unchanged for several aeons at the bottom of the ocean—an 'age without a name'. But when it is a case of *Labour Monthly*—fifty crowded years of glorious life indeed, and not only crowded, but fighting, years at that.

The limit of half-an-hour is dictated by the didactic purpose. This is rather a heavy way of saying that, if it is good enough, we want as many people to see, and know about, that journal and those years as possible. One hour, two hours, three hours would not be too long for such a subject as the study of these exciting, meaningful years: the what, the how and the future. No problem making it gripping. But the wise film-maker knows not only how to make a *good* film, he must take into account the circumstances of its possible distribution and exhibition. 'Left' films in most parts of the world do not get shown in luxury picture palaces with plush seats. In the parts of the world that need them most, the halls will probably be improvised, conditions difficult, projection variable, the seats hard. The endurance of the bottom determines the effectiveness of the show. Next the ubiquity of our film will, in practice, be dependent upon its length. Who—consider—would knowingly book, stage or otherwise present, who consecrate an entire outing or recreation opportunity to going to see, as sole or even main and principal attraction, a film about a periodical and a 'left' periodical to boot? Who, indeed, but the already converted, and what is the use of that? On the other hand make your film brief enough, snappy enough, gripping enough to satisfy, without strain upon its *sitzfleisch*, an audience once present, as supplement to something else, and you may reach out to anyone. Be brilliant, and there are few audiences will not be pleased to have been reached.

Hence the half-hour top limit. Hence what it is not—could not be—and what it is. The *LM* film is no encyclopaedia, no History of the World, or even the labour movement, during our two generations in ten volumes or twenty-six episodes. It is exactly what it sets out to

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be, a marvellous mini-panorama, of the fighting adventures of a journal that has held steadfastly through all that time, the guidance it has given, the support it has attracted, those with it and against it, the sufferings, the combats and the triumphs of the peoples and the causes it has served. Every glimpse in it is striking enough to fascinate, nothing is long enough to bore. Stanley Forman, as producer, and our friends and colleagues in the labs and archives of the GDR have done wonders. There are scenes in it we may wish to have dwelt on longer. Remember, students now can (and they will) study it for centuries in film archives and take stills from it. And as for you, if with the help of Alan Bush's music it seems to fly past grandly, like a fanfare, remember that is exactly what it is, and no bad fault. After all, you can see it again.

Victoria Wegg-Prosser, in the British Film Institute's *Monthly Film Bulletin*, May 1973

Fifty Fighting Years is a tribute to *Labour Monthly*, the socialist magazine founded in 1921 by R. Palme Dutt and still edited by him today. Using actuality, cartoons, a montage of pages from the magazine, and interviews with Dutt and his associate editor Robin Page Arnot, the film reiterates *Labour Monthly*'s uncompromising call for the unity of the working classes to defeat the evils of capitalism, recounting the history of the past fifty years as the magazine saw it, and pointing out the numerous occasions when it was right and everyone else was wrong: Hitler's career was predicted ten months before his abortive *putsch*; the ultimate failure of Ramsay MacDonald, Neville Chamberlain, Winston Churchill, Clement Attlee and Harold Wilson was foreseen and bitterly criticised; and the only man to escape censure seems to have been Joseph Stalin.

The film's narration, spoken by Dutt and Arnot, is inevitably biased; but even though it will only confirm rather than change audience opinions about the communist and socialist movements, *Fifty Fighting Years*—with its wealth of archive footage, stirring music (including the Chartists' song and the forties' protest song, 'Truth is on the March') and lively cartoons—is a pleasure to watch. Several sequences are particularly emotive and poignant: the general strike championed by A. J. Cook and Harry Pollitt; German newsreel footage of Chamberlain's 'Peace in our Time' press conference; the cartoons—curiously reminiscent of *Private Eye*—of Halifax, Chamberlain and Home in 1939, and of Barber, Heath and Home

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again in 1970; and an extraordinary list of artists blacklisted by the BBC for supporting the People's Convention of 1941. The whole has been expertly edited by Waltrud Hartmann of the East German documentary studios, who assisted this part of the operation. And in an era of 'balanced' historical reconstructions for television, *Fifty Fighting Years* emerges as a refreshingly committed film, with Dutt's call for solidarity among left-wing labour as relevant today as it was in 1921.

From *Time Out*, June 22-28, 1973

Fifty-two years after its founding, *Labour Monthly* remains what it has always been—a magazine of left unity, close to the Communist Party but not tied to it, its pages open to militants in the labour movement in this country and abroad, as well as to leaders (and rank-and-filers) from national liberation struggles everywhere. It began with R. Palme Dutt as editor, Robin Page Arnot as associate editor; and that, too, is how things stand today. *John Lloyd* went to see the première of *Fifty Fighting Years*, the film made about the journal, at the NFT. . . .

'Two of the leading militants in the Party's founding were R. Palme Dutt and Robin Page Arnot. They worked together, under the stern eye of Beatrice Webb, at the newly-formed Labour Research Department. Both were convinced of the need for unity of the left on the basis of class struggle—and while the Communist Party gradually gathered strength, they founded, in 1921, a monthly journal, *Labour Monthly*.

'On Sunday, June 10, the film made about *Labour Monthly*—*Fifty Fighting Years*—was given its première at the National Film Theatre. It was an event of some emotion. Palme Dutt and Page Arnot are now in their eighties, and leant heavily on sticks as they were escorted to the stage. Hugh Scanlon, President of the AUEW, gave an appreciation: he recalled that *Labour Monthly* was founded in the conviction that the twentieth century would see the establishment of socialism, and ended by saying "*Labour Monthly* is unique in the western world in providing socialist theory for labour activists."

'Palme Dutt remained seated as he spoke: "You will pardon me if my bones do not permit me to show you the respect I feel, and if I therefore remain seated." But his voice was unimpaired, as was his mind; he spoke with some pride of the past, but also of the future: "Our journal pledges itself to maintain the banner of Marxism,

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internationalism and left unity . . . in the mighty movement of millions which is socialism."

'The film could scarcely compete with the presence of the two most venerable of British communists: and, as though knowing its place, it seemed not to attempt to do so. It was a chronicle of fifty years, not just of a journal, but of the times which formed the content of its pages, and on which it exerted an influence beyond its size. Directed by Stanley Forman and made with the assistance of the German Democratic Republic, *Fifty Fighting Years* is documentary agitprop of the most skilful kind. The material is of three kinds: old footage, cartoons and interviews with Palme Dutt and Page Arnot. Edited by Waltrud Hartmann, the three styles complement each other to locate *LM* firmly in the struggles from which it emerged. We are reminded that contributors included Lenin, George Bernard Shaw, Harry Pollitt, Willie Gallacher, G. D. H. Cole, Kwame Nkrumah and Jawaharlal Nehru; and we are shown too, with clips from news footage of the UCS occupation, the freeing of the Pentonville Five and of Angela Davis, that the struggle remains sharp, and that the fifty-year-old journal still hones it.

'The film is not merely a memento, but an exemplar. It richly deserves an audience.'

Mimi Silver, in the Workers' Music Association *Bulletin*, July/ August 1973

The film of that 'little wonder', *Labour Monthly*, is so exciting, so revealing—with the hard punch of important facts to show political history over the last fifty years, and so graphically portrayed: grim items humanly and amusingly given, so that they were easily understood, with narrations from the two editors, and appropriate familiar music from Alan Bush, sometimes played, sometimes well sung by soloist and choir. This was recruited from the English-speaking students in the GDR who learned the songs specially.

Members of the audience were heard to remark, and even gasp at some of the facts given, well remembered by older people. How apt 'The Land is the Landlord's' sounded with the foreground of the film. Congratulations to Alan Bush for his part in this epic film. I hope it will be widely shown as a historically interesting film as well as to publicise this excellent journal. It prints articles from the widest section of the labour movement on day to day issues affecting all our lives.

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BOOKS

John Strachey
Hugh Thomas
Eyre Methuen, 316 pp, £4.50

JOHN STRACHEY was born into a family with centuries of ruling class, empire-building expertise. His father edited the Tory *Spectator*. His cousin, Lytton Strachey was the Bloomsbury writer whose fame rests on his debunking of Victorian worthies, *Eminent Victorians*. His education, Eton and Balliol, Oxford, was typically top-drawer.

At Oxford he was a member of the Tory Carlton Club, and when he left the university, he wrote for his father's paper, on foreign affairs, maintaining a close connection with that paper throughout his life. He entered parliament in 1929 as a Labour MP, for a number of years was associated with Mosley when that aristocrat was in revolt against the lumbering reactionary Jimmy Thomas in the second Labour government, and he followed Mosley out of the Labour Party, and into the so-called 'New Party'. Strachey left the 'New Party' when he realised its fascist character (it became, of course, the British Union of Fascists), after the Ashton-under-Lyne by-election of 1931.

Thereafter, in personal contact with Communist leaders, and receiving guidance and counsel from them, he began a rapid and important leftward turn. Pollitt, Dutt, Burns, Rothstein, Montagu and others influenced him at this time, and there is no doubt that he made a study of Marxism which no one else in the labour movement outside the Communist Party itself ever did, except perhaps Harold Laski at that time. (Today, of course, it is the boast of Wilson that he never got beyond the first few pages of *Capital*.)

The result was a series of books, *The Menace of Fascism*, *The Coming Struggle for Power*, *The Theory and Practice of Socialism*, which had an instant effect on the labour movement. At this period, too, Strachey, in collaboration with Victor Gollancz and Professor Harold Laski (and with much serious guidance and help from the Communists), launched the Left Book Club which reinforced the leftward surge against fascism, against the National Government, for the Spanish republican cause, and for the popular front and socialism.

The Marxist phase in Strachey's career was short-lived; it lasted less than ten years of his sixty-two years. He had been a Tory: he ended up moving more and more to the right in the labour movement, and died a confirmed Gaitskellite, having parted company on the way in the later years with Aneurin Bevan. But it is the one significant phase, and the one which will assure his place in the history of the labour movement.

Today, Marxism is a respectable acceptable academic study, too often, it is true, severed from its revolutionary spirit, and the bookstalls are stacked with paperbacks, some of great interest and value, dealing with the founding fathers of socialism and their works. Forty years ago this was not the case, and the work of Strachey, like that of his collaborators on the Left Book Club, and like that of the Dean of Canterbury, contributed to this development.

Strachey was a powerful writer, not by any means a rousing or even a convincing speaker, and this reviewer has a vivid memory of Strachey speaking at the invitation of the Rusholme (Manchester) branch of the Communist Party in 1938, or early 1939, on 'Why I am a Communist'.

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He had to meet organised vocal opposition of a group of Mosley fascists, and the arguments of a distinguished Trotskyist publicist who had written a book called *World Revolution*. But the positive, confident documented lucidity of the three books I have listed above was sadly missing from his oral statement.

The writer of this biography, Professor Hugh Thomas, suggests that for Strachey a father-figure, a leading personality, was necessary and that this role was played at varying times by Mosley, by Bevan, and by Gaitskell. History will show that from the relatively short period of his association with and dependence on a group of Communists in the thirties, emerged the one fruitful and lasting contribution that this busy, intellectual, fretful, ambitious man made to the advancement of mankind. BEN AINLEY

Red Rising in Bavaria
Richard Grunberger
Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 164 pp, £2.75

IN NOVEMBER 1918 German sailors, soldiers and workers overthrew the Kaiser's régime, utterly discredited by defeat in the first world war, and set up councils of their own representatives which for the moment held power. To that extent great masses of the German people had clearly learned some lessons of the two Russian revolutions of 1917. The leading parties among them were not Communists but 'Majority' Social-Democrats, who had supported the war from the start, and 'Minority' or Independent Socialists, who had broken away during the war but whose main leaders were now terrified of 'Bolshevism'. As a result, a coalition of the two parties took over power (and with it 'loyal' army units under their old officers), formed additional 'free corps' of royalist cut-throats, and—after the Independents had withdrawn—saved Germany for imperialism and militarism once more by drowning the mass movement in blood.

With it they crushed the recently formed Communist Party, killing its two outstanding leaders, Rosa Luxembourg and Karl Liebknecht. In this treachery the Social-Democratic leaders were helped above all by the armed forces and weapons deliberately placed at their disposal by the victorious Western Allies under a clause of the armistice of November 11, and by the torrent of lies about Soviet Russia with which the German people had been deluged since November 1917—and which the Social-Democratic leaders, too, now turned against the Communists. Some sectarian mistakes made by the young Communist Party, against the advice of Luxembourg and Liebknecht (boycotting the elections and refusing to work in the old trade unions), cannot wipe out the overwhelming responsibility of the right-wing Social-Democrats.

There has been in print in English, since 1923, a lucid account of these events from the Marxist standpoint by Philips Price (then a Communist, later a Labour MP), entitled *Germany in Transition*, still worth reading.

One sector of that fateful struggle revealed most sharply all the fatal characteristics of the general situation in Germany—the succession of governments formed in Bavaria (until then an autonomous kingdom). First came a republican government in which Social-Democrats of both sections co-operated with capitalist nominees and old imperial officials (November 7, 1918-February 21, 1919). It ended with the murder of the Independent Socialist premier, Kurt Eisner, by an officer-aristocrat, Arco-Valley, one of those spared by the new régime in the name of democracy. Then came a 'Socialist Unity' government of the two parties, but led by a 'Majority

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Socialist', Hoffman, which professed to combine the power of both parliament and the workers', peasants' and soldiers' councils of all Bavaria (March 4-April 6). It fell apart when, learning of Hoffman's secret intrigues with the bloody reaction now ruling in Berlin, the workers' councils called a general strike, demanding a soviet republic. The third stage was the proclamation of a Soviet Republic by an all-Bavarian conference of the workers' councils (at that time including merchants, professors and officials) —but with a government still composed of both right and left Social-Democrats, with Anarchist and non-party economist members, and led by a socialist poet with Anarchist leanings, Ernst Toller. It ended when Hoffmann, relying on reactionary troops gathered in north Bavaria and on so-called 'republican security forces' (i.e. armed police taken over from the old régime after November 7) in Munich itself, moved on the Bavarian capital. The fourth and last stage now opened—the establishment, by the workers' and soldiers' councils of Munich itself, of a new soviet government, composed of Communists and Left Independents and headed by Eugen Leviné-Nissen (April 13-May 1). The new government took a number of urgent and overdue steps to arm the workers, disarm the 'security force' and the bourgeoisie, control food supplies, establish workers' control in the factories and take over the banks.

But it was too late. Hoffmann's force of 35,000 White troops, supplied by Berlin, reinforced by the 'free corps' and commanded by one of the Kaiser's generals, moved swiftly on Munich. Toller, who had been given a responsible post, now openly attacked the Communist leaders as 'alien communists' at a workers' council meeting and secured their dismissal (April 26). By May 2, despite fierce resistance by groups of armed workers, the Whites had occupied Munich and begun a wholesale butchery, in which nearly 1,000 men and women were killed.

Mr Grunberger has given some account of these events, marred by the inevitable anti-Soviet irrelevancies, and by an obvious reluctance to place the main blame fairly and squarely where it lay—on the Western Allies and the Social-Democratic leaders. But the lessons of the tragedy stand out clearly enough from his narrative, all the same. ANDREW ROTHSTEIN

Victorian and Edwardian Shopworkers
Wilfred B. Whitaker
David & Charles, 222 pp, £4.95

IN A WELL-DOCUMENTED story of the life of shopworkers in the Victorian and Edwardian eras of 1840-1940, the author reveals that others besides industrialists suffered lives of misery and humiliation. He tells in great detail how the liberal-minded of those days struggled to shorten shopworkers' hours, improve living-in conditions, for better food and other amenities. Though the Early Closing Association was formed in 1842, it took another 40 years to get the first Committee of Enquiry to look into conditions in shops. During the next 15 years, three more such committees reported the need for reforms but nothing whatever was done. It was 70 years later, in 1912, that Churchill announced that a Bill (much mutilated) would be introduced. The half-holiday at last became a reality for shopworkers, though, alas, with many classes of shops exempt.

Whitaker has spent 20 years collecting and collating his material. For the socialist speaker it is a mine of information, damning the capitalism of those days. The Early Closing Association, in its 1891 report, gave as average opening times 7 to 8 a.m.

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and closing times on three days 10 p.m., and on Fridays and Saturdays 10.45 p.m. to 12.15 a.m. So weekly hours were 80 to 90 as against the present 40 and 48. No overtime paid. In his conclusion, Whitaker says:

'The story of the struggle to obtain shorter working hours and a weekly half holiday for the shopworkers and their employers shows that the old concept of *laissez faire* died more slowly in Victorian and Edwardian days than the historians of industrial relations have let their readers believe.'

This seems to be the author's outlook on society's make-up and no causes, or solution such as a socialist society, are offered.

ERNIE POUNTNEY

Republic or Empire: American Resistance to the Philippine War
Daniel B. Schirmer

Schenkman (General Learning Press, USA), 298 pp, available on order from Collet's

ONE OF THE MOST VIGOROUS and effective campaigns against an imperialist seizure of colonies took place in the United States at the turn of the century. It was conducted by a protest movement called the Anti-Imperialist League, which opposed the US military conquest of the Philippines, taken from Spain in an 1898 war for redivision of colonies, used by Lenin in his *Imperialism* as a prime example of the operation of that system.

The Anti-Imperialist League drew its main support from liberal intellectual, academic and political reform groups that were concerned over the excesses of the newly-emerging US monopoly capitalism. Dr Schirmer presents in detail the development of the movement and the issues it raised, particularly the New England section of it that provided the most capable and dedicated of the League's leaders. For participants in the contemporary movement against the Vietnam war, this book is an excellent link with similar past movements and an aid to historical perspective on US imperialism.

It needs to be said, however, that Dr Schirmer has devoted himself to only one phase of opposition to colonial possession and exploitation of the Philippines. The 'great debate' aroused by this question revealed serious contradictions among US economic interests, agricultural producers especially objecting to owning colonies to which preferences had to be given in the US market for products that competed with US domestic products. In many ways, the policies hammered out in the 'great debate', which continued in one form or another until the Philippines was given nominal independence in 1946 (Dr Schirmer carries his account only to 1904), laid the groundwork for the neo-colonial exploitation of that country that has followed. The Anti-Imperialist League was related to these questions somewhat in the way that the anti-Vietnam war movement has been related to the overall crisis of US imperialism today.

WILLIAM J. POMEROY

The Two Nations: Inequality in Britain Today

Labour Research Department, 28 pp, 15p

THERE ARE ENOUGH facts in this valuable pamphlet's small compass to shoot down all the Tory arguments about Phases I to III, to heighten the battles for equal pay and higher pensions, and to provide left-wing delegates to this month's Labour Party Conference with ammunition on all the class issues that arise at Blackpool. Make sure you read it.

A.B.

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THREE CHEERS

TWO cheers for our fund. And the first is for all who contributed to the figure below, nicely topping our £100 target in spite of the difficulties of collecting during the mid-holiday season month of August. This is much better going than recent monthly totals, and with an even bigger effort we can try to compensate for the shortfall over these months.

Our second cheer is for a group of *LM* friends at the TUC who gave generously to a quick collection and sent us £15 to start the September figures (which will, of course, appear in our next issue). We would like particularly to thank Natsopa delegates, among whom were those from the *Sun* Machine Chapel and the *Daily Mirror* Engineering Assistants' Chapel. Our on-the-spot collector comments that the task was 'a very great pleasure, and a reaffirmation of the high regard for *LM* among those active in the movement.'

A third cheer is in reserve, hoping that the September total can beat the present one of:

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